



Economic Development

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City of Ellsworth Request for Proposals Economic Development Business Attraction Plan, Market Analysis, & Action Plan Matrix

The City of Ellsworth is seeking proposals from qualified and experienced vendors to conduct an Economic Development Business Attraction Plan, to also include a Market Analysis and Action Plan Matrix, in order to help guide economic development policies and strategies in Ellsworth. The selected consultant must be an expert in economic development, specifically in conducting market analyses processes, analyzing existing data, and determining projections to develop an Action Plan Matrix. The Action Plan Matrix will identify priorities and catalytic strategies to help leverage targeted growth and maximize economic return, including public and private investments. The matrix will also provide tangible recommendations to help guide Ellsworth's future. The action plan component of this project is not a comprehensive economic development strategic plan.

Any questions regarding the project specifications should be directed to Janna Richards, Economic Development Director, by emailing jrichards@ellsworthmaine.gov.

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) FOR
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS ATTRACTION PLAN, MARKET ANALYSIS, and
ACTION PLAN MATRIX
*City of Ellsworth***

RFP Circulation Date:
Proposal Submission Due Date:

Monday, October 31, 2022
Wednesday, November 30, 2022

Introduction

The City of Ellsworth is seeking proposals from qualified and experienced vendors to conduct an Economic Development Business Attraction Plan, to also include a Market Analysis and Action Plan Matrix, in order to help guide economic development policies and strategies in Ellsworth. The selected consultant must be an expert in economic development, specifically in conducting market analyses processes, analyzing existing data, and determining projections to develop an Action Plan Matrix. The Action Plan Matrix will identify priorities and catalytic strategies to help leverage targeted growth and maximize economic return, including public and private investments. The matrix will also provide tangible recommendations to help guide Ellsworth's future. The action plan component of this project is not a comprehensive economic development strategic plan.

Background

The City of Ellsworth is a year-round service center community for much of Downeast Maine and the Acadia National Park regions. In 2010, Ellsworth was considered the fastest growing City in Maine, with a 19.9% increase in population between the 2000 and 2010 Census counts. Ellsworth continues to grow, with a population of 8,399 according to the 2020 Census, an 8.5% increase since the 2010 Census (7,741). Ellsworth is also the largest City in area in the State of Maine, at 94 square miles, of which 80 square miles is land, and 14 square miles is water.

Ellsworth is situated on the Union River, a tidal river eventually leading out to the Gulf of Maine. Bangor, Maine and the I-95 highway corridor is a 30-40 minute commute from downtown Ellsworth, and the City lies at the junction of coastal Route 1 and Route 3 corridors. The City is located 45-minutes from an international airport (Bangor) and 15-minutes from a regional airport (Trenton/Bar Harbor) with daily commuter flights to Boston/Logan International Airport. Ellsworth is also a 30-minute drive to Acadia National Park, which sees upwards of four million visitors per year. Five major universities/colleges are also within an hour drive of the City.

Ellsworth's major employers include non-profits such as The Jackson Laboratory, Northern Light Maine Coast Hospital, and the Downeast YMCA, as well as for-profits including Hannaford Brothers Supermarket, Walmart, Hammond Lumber, Bar Harbor Bank and Trust, Home Depot, and Darlings car dealership, to name a few. Other notable major employers in Hancock County, where Ellsworth resides, include College of the Atlantic, Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory, and Hinckley Company. Primarily, large employers are within the healthcare and child care, finance, biotech/research and development, building/building supplies, grocery, and lodging sectors. The City has a Commerce Park, a Business Park, and areas that are designated as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts. The majority of the City's commercial area is within the federal Opportunity Zone established in May 2018.

In addition to large employers, a significant portion of Ellsworth's economy can be attributed to small business. Many small businesses reside in Ellsworth's historic downtown and the City's Main Street is an Affiliate Member of Main Street Maine, a State program of the national Main Street America organization. Ellsworth's historic downtown and waterfront is one of many distinct features that draw new residents and visitors. Ellsworth's recreational amenities, including a harbor, several parks, a City forest, and extensive trail networks, as well as its focus on culture and the arts, strongly contribute to the City's enhanced quality of life.

The City of Ellsworth, Ellsworth Business Development Corporation, Ellsworth Area Chamber of Commerce, and Heart of Ellsworth (the downtown Main Street organization) work together to promote the City of Ellsworth as an economically, socially, and culturally vital community that serves the region by providing an exceptional place for business, leisure, and life.

Project Purpose and Need

The City of Ellsworth's Economic Development Department, Ellsworth Business Development Corporation, and City Council are seeking assistance with conducting an Economic Development Business Attraction Plan, to also include a Market Analysis and Action Plan Matrix, in order to help guide economic development strategies.

The City of Ellsworth does have an existing Economic Development Business Attraction Plan, last updated in 2011 (the plan before the 2011 plan was conducted in 2007). In summary, the 2011 Plan helped to: 1) identify industries and uses for which Ellsworth is well suited, 2) identify programs that would help leverage regional economy policy initiatives (i.e. tax credits, grants, other funding mechanisms), and 3) used the identified information to reach out and draw businesses to the City. Strengths and weaknesses/challenges of the economy are also identified in the plan and recommendations to overcome these challenges, when it is in the City's power to do so, are provided. Overall, tactical and strategic steps to improve business attraction and retention are provided in the plan.

Information and data that was analyzed to formulate recommendations and strategic steps are also provided in the plan, summarized, and listed below:

- Analysis/review of previous plans;
- Interviews with Ellsworth businesses and institutions;
- Regional Competitive Analysis (communities in the Northeast that Ellsworth would compete with for employers/investment);
- Population/Demographics & Labor Force Availability/Analysis (Skills, Salaries, Education);
- Transportation & Infrastructure;
- Tax Structure & Incentive Programs;
- Climate & Quality of Life.

In the 2011 plan, the following industries and use types were identified as appropriate targets for the Ellsworth area:

- Creative Economy;
- Financial Services;
- Food Processing;
- Green Energy (Biofuels);
- Healthcare;

- Manufacturing/Assembly;
- Retail.

While these industries/use types seem to continue to be viable in Ellsworth, given the changes to the population, workforce, and economy over the last ten years, an updated analysis is warranted.

Scope of Work and Deliverables

The selected consultant will conduct an Economic Development Business Attraction Plan (using the 2011 Plan as a reference), to include a Market Analysis and the development of an Action Plan Matrix. These deliverables will:

- Identify emerging economic development opportunities;
- Be reviewed for incorporation into the City's upcoming comprehensive plan update;
- Include in-depth analysis of business sectors to focus attraction efforts toward and a summary of Ellsworth's strategic offerings to these sectors;
- Include an analysis of existing industries in Ellsworth; and
- Include an analysis of land use (residential, office, commercial, industrial) supply versus demand, as well as recommendations for changes to land use to support current and future economic development opportunities.

In addition, the Plan, Market Analysis, and Action Plan Matrix will:

- 1) Analyze, evaluate, and address socioeconomic conditions, existing and future lifestyle trends, community and area market strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats;
- 2) Engage with community and business officials to gain input on local conditions and needs;
- 3) Develop a greater understanding of targeted sectors and subsectors that offer opportunities which Ellsworth has an advantage and opportunity to leverage;
- 4) Evaluate the economic trends within identified sectors;
- 5) Analyze Ellsworth's workforce and labor force current and future needs, including, but not limited to broadband, childcare, transportation, and housing stock;
- 6) Evaluate the availability and competitiveness of key sites in Ellsworth;
- 7) Evaluate market leakage and future potential absorption for residential and commercial growth, with consideration of ongoing and future infrastructure, transportation, and other improvements;
- 8) Review local policies and practices in support of economic development and recommend short-term (immediate to 3 years) and long-term (3 to 5+ years) improvements as appropriate;
- 9) Analyze Ellsworth's residential market and the City's housing policies and provide recommendations to help ensure appropriate housing to support a robust workforce;
- 10) Provide an impact evaluation/cost-benefit analysis of commercial, industrial, and residential development to understand how growth in these land use types will affect the need for additional/upgraded City resources and infrastructure.

The Action Plan Matrix will identify priorities and catalytic strategies to help leverage targeted growth and maximize economic return, including public and private investments. The matrix will also provide tangible recommendations to help guide Ellsworth's future. The Plan, Market Analysis, and Action Plan Matrix will provide objective data to address a variety of questions that include but are not limited to:

- What do Ellsworth's demographics look like today, and what are the trends? How do Ellsworth's demographics differ from surrounding communities?

- What business sectors are growing (or contracting) regionally, and how does that affect Ellsworth? What is Ellsworth's market share and market opportunities within these various sectors?
- What are Ellsworth's strong business sectors? What sectors are stable? What are the emerging sectors? What should Ellsworth do to nurture these sectors and continue their growth?
- What does the market demand in terms of types of new housing? What are the deficiencies in Ellsworth's housing stock, including quantity, location, and housing type, size, and cost?
- What percentage of the retail market share is Ellsworth gaining from surrounding communities? What are we losing? What is Ellsworth's niche retail area? Where can Ellsworth gain?
- What are Ellsworth's opportunity areas? What areas should be targeted for growth? What types of growth should Ellsworth place its focus on currently and in the future?
- Are there other areas that should be considered for development and growth?
- Are there deficiencies in other type of "infrastructure", such as broadband, childcare, and transportation, which would impact the growth of workforce and business development in the City?
- Which businesses are best suited for our downtown, business/industrial parks, and other geographic locations within the City?

Outcomes of the Plan, Market Analysis, and Action Plan Matrix will be used by the City's Economic Development and Planning departments, other City departments, the Ellsworth Business Development Corporation, the City Council, the Planning Board, existing and future businesses, and the public. Key findings and the Action Plan Matrix will be incorporated into the update the City's Comprehensive Plan and will be used to make public and private investment decisions.

It is expected that the chosen consultant will meet with the committee responsible for this project at least twice during the project schedule, and that stakeholder and public meetings will also be a part of this project.

The Economic Development Department will be responsible for:

- 1) Administering the project and overseeing the consultant's work on this project;
- 2) Providing relevant studies, plans, and initiatives;
- 3) Assisting with the coordination of meetings with stakeholders, such as City officials and staff, members of the Ellsworth Business Development Corporation and other City-based economic development related organizations;
- 4) Assisting with the coordination of meetings with the public and local businesses;
- 5) Assisting with other community outreach.

Budget

The budget for this project is not to exceed \$50,000, inclusive of expenses.

Submission

Submissions must be received both hard copy and electronically by **Wednesday, November 30, 2022 at 4PM**. Submit one printed proposal in a sealed package clearly labeled with the consultant's name and address; and email a PDF version to Janna Richards:

Janna Richards
Economic Development Department
Ellsworth City Hall
1 City Hall Plaza
Ellsworth, ME 04605
jrichards@ellsworthmaine.gov

Submitted proposals must include, at a very minimum, the following:

- 1) A cover letter introducing the vendor(s) and highlighting the qualifications as they relate to this project.
- 2) Description of relevant and/or similar projects and responsibilities completed by the consultant(s) in the last five (5) years.
- 3) Statement of qualifications including a resume and related experience for each key team member expected to perform on this contract.
- 4) Project approach, deliverables, and description of the process to complete the project scope.
- 5) Project timeline/schedule.
- 6) Pricing, including total contract sum.
- 7) A minimum of three (3) current references including complete contact information for those who have professional knowledge and experience of the consultant's capabilities.

Proposals will not be returned and will become property of the City of Ellsworth. Your proposal must include responses to all requirements contained within this RFP. Proposals shall remain effective for ninety (90) days beyond the submittal date. The contents of the proposal of the selected proposer will become part of the contractual obligations to the extent that the proposal does not conflict with the provisions of this RFP.

All questions regarding this Request for Proposals (RFP) shall be directed in writing to Janna Richards, Economic Development Director, via email at jrichards@ellsworthmaine.gov. Questions shall be due at 12:00PM, noon, on Monday, November 14, 2022. All Questions and Answers shall be posted to the City's webpage (<https://www.ellsworthmaine.gov/rfps/>) by 4PM on Thursday, November 17, 2022.

Proposal Preparation

Proposals shall be typewritten, with pages numbered, and shall include sufficient documentation to allow a total and accurate evaluation of the consultant and the work to be performed. To facilitate evaluation, the consultant is requested to organize the proposal in the following order:

- 1) Tab 1 – Consulting Vendor Overview
- 2) Tab 2 – Similar Projects
- 3) Tab 3 – Statement of Qualifications
- 4) Tab 4 – Project Approach
- 5) Tab 5 – Project Timeline
- 6) Tab 6 – Pricing
- 7) Tab 7 – References

Evaluation Criteria

From the complete proposals received before the deadline, finalists may be selected to present their respective proposals to the selection committee for review. Finalists shall be scored and ranked based on criteria that include, but are not limited to:

- Technical approach to the project;
- Professional qualifications of key personnel;
- Previous experience and proven performance with similar projects;
- Public participation and engagement methods;
- Understanding of project purposes;
- Ability to meet project schedule and budget;
- Current workload and availability of necessary, key personnel;
- Estimated costs and the flexibility to adjust the proposed work program to meet budgetary constraints;
- Quality and clarity of presentation, if applicable;
- Other factors deemed relevant by the selection committee.

Selection

The City of Ellsworth reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals and to waive any informalities or irregularities. After review in accordance with the criteria set forth above, the selection committee will rank the proposals. The committee may then finalize the rankings and select the successful proposer, or may interview (either in-person and/or by telephone/virtual) the top ranked vendor(s) to aid in its determination of the final rankings.

The selection committee will then proceed to negotiate with the highest ranked proposer. Should the committee be unable to negotiate an acceptable contract, negotiation will then proceed with the next highest ranked proposer.

Schedule

RFP Available: Monday, October 31, 2022

RFP Questions Due: Monday, November 14, 2022

RFP Answers Posted: Thursday, November 17, 2022

Proposals Due: Wednesday, November 30, 2022

Proposal Review Period: Thursday, December 1, 2022 through Friday, December 9, 2022

Optional Interview(s): Monday/Tuesday, December 12 – 13, 2022

Consultant Selected: Wednesday, December 14, 2022

Recommendation to City Council: Monday, December 19, 2022

Contract Commences: Tuesday, January 3, 2023

Anticipated Project Completion Date: Monday May 1, 2023